

Salts falter at final friendly

5 August 2022



Leatherhead 3-0 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly - Stella Lamont Trophy Wednesday 3rd August 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

Tanners ease to victory. In five days we have faced two Isthmian League Step Four teams in Walton & Hersham and Leatherhead and it's fair to say there will be little between the pair as our landlords repeated the scoreline we suffered at the Elmbridge Xcel Sports Hub. As with the previous match, the Tanners could afford to miss a penalty too in their 3-0 win.

This match was listed as the Stella Lamont Trophy, named after our long-serving Club President. It is most unusual to name a trophy after someone who is still with us and indeed Stella very much is; celebrating her 94th birthday on 1st September! We also took the opportunity to show off the new kit for this season, which regrettably followed a trend of recent years in gradually becoming more white than blue, with our players almost appearing to wear white bibs across their chests!

As a larger number of players have now signed, I am able to refer to more of them by name and all eleven of our starters in this match have put pen to paper. How many of them will make the starting eleven on Saturday remains a challenge for our Management who used seventeen players and had four unused subs available too, not to mention four other signed players who were not present!

In reality this was a very similar match to our contest at Walton & Hersham, but there were a lot more goal scoring opportunities for both teams over the ninety minutes, as neither team earned top marks for their finishing. We made a bright start though and Jahobi Maher sent an early strike a yard over the bar before a Ryan "Butch" Smith free kick was headed at goal by Steve Springett, only to see the ball superbly tipped over by the Leatherhead keeper. This would prove to be our best chance of the match.

In response a tame shot from our landlords was dragged across goal, but they had more success in the 11th minute when we failed to deal with an extremely long throw in and the loose ball was drilled low past Matt Walton by Tarpey although our new keeper, who has played well in pre-season, did well to even get a hand on the shot.

We were back on the attack soon after and Athan Smith-Joseph produced a good run and cut inside his man, but fired a curling shot just over the bar from 15 yards. There were plenty more efforts on goal from either side, although most of them came from Leatherhead and as the half progressed our good start became more of a distant memory. A 37th minute far post header was a good opportunity for our opponents to extend their lead, but this was sent over the bar from fairly close range and the teams went in at the break with a 1-0 scoreline.

Smith-Joseph saw another effort just high and wide as we opened the second half, and Leatherhead nearly scored in the 58th minute after a deep corner was headed back across goal, but a low shot flew away off our post to safety.

We then had some half chances around the hour mark, firstly when Smith-Joseph's shot from the right was parried by the Leatherhead keeper, but not in the usual way, as the ball spooned up off him over the bar, dropping onto the roof of the net. Then from the corner Jubril "Jibs" Adamson was unable to deal with a Smith corner in a good position and the ball hit him and was cleared. A few minutes after this Smith struck a shot from at least thirty yards which cleared the bar by a couple of feet.

The game then stopped for six minutes while a stretcher was required for a Leatherhead player who looked in a lot of discomfort. We wish him well. On the pitch we made five substitutions, but we created less as the half progressed and conceded a second goal in the 75th minute as Tarpey latched on to a long ball in a bit too much space and clipped the ball over the advancing but exposed Walton. Walton was replaced by our other regular keeper, but he suffered a similar fate eleven minutes later when the Leatherhead number three made a fine run from the full back position and took a return pass before clipping the ball over our man for a very good goal.

Substitute Adam Grant had a late chance when he received the ball from a poor keeper clearance, but his effort from 40 yards was a few yards wide of the vacant target. For all our attacking, 3-0 was a little harsh at this point, but it nearly got worse as a clumsy foul led to a penalty, although the same post came to our rescue again and the deficit remained at three.

There is a school of thought that says friendlies against top Four sides will teach us little, compared to a match against a team of a similar level and I largely subscribe to that theory. However, these two defeats have produced some positives and we will also enter the League season with our feet firmly on the ground when we open up on Saturday at Shoreham.



Swans glide past Salts - Walton & Hershham 3 Epsom & Ewell 0

5 August 2022



Pre-season Friendly Friday 29th July 2022 Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk Reporter: Richard Lambert

Our pre-season has been a good one so far, and there were many positives to take from this match, despite the scoreline that just confirmed there is a large gap between Step Four and Step Six football, which we all knew anyway!

On the artificial surface at the Xcel Sports Hub; a venue where we had conceded ten goals in two previous visits, this match ended with another three goals against us, but for large periods of the match we gave as good as our opponents and the work rate was also impressive.

We conceded an early penalty after Jahobi Maher dragged down the winger, but the hosts tried to get clever, with one of those "Henry/Pires style penalties, but our keeper was alert to the danger and made a fine save from the eventual shot in the 12th minute.

We had a long range effort from new signing Tiago Andrade that wasn't far away, before Jubril "Jibs" Adamson fired a half volley just over the bar as the hosts failed to deal with a Ryan "Butch" Smith free kick, but our keeper was back in action soon after, making a fine save from an angle after a good advantage from the referee. We then trailed in the 35th minute after a near post corner was headed in from close range by Joe Hicks.

Two more saves were made by our keeper before a Smith strike from 25 yards tested the gloves of the Walton keeper, but we also saw a recent new signing, the re-joining Hakim Griffiths, knocked to the ground and he required replacement just before the break.

We were caught out at the start of the second half as a low ball in from the left was tapped in at the far post by Eddie Simon for Walton and Hershham's second goal in the 48th minute, and soon after this we made six changes, in addition to the two made either side of half time, although despite the disruption to our side the match remained competitive throughout. We clearly have a number of players fighting for places right now and all are contributing. It's a nice problem for our Management to have!

A third goal for the hosts on the hour was ruled out for offside after the Assistant's flag was raised, although much discussion ensued between the officials before the decision was finally confirmed. Six minutes later our substitute striker pinged a shot against the Walton post from 20 yards and was unlucky to see the ball fly off it across the face of the goal instead of into the net. This led to our best spell of the game with some decent football and we looked like we may get the score back to 2-1 at any moment, but as we chased the match, we unfortunately gave away another penalty in the 89th minute and by the time it was taken a minute later, Mills chose to stick with a more orthodox spot kick this time and scored their third and final goal.

Despite the scoreline it is sometimes good to lose a friendly as you can learn a lot about players in adversity. Another tough challenge awaits on Wednesday as we face Leatherhead at Fetcham Grove, but this result hasn't dented my belief in any way that we will be competing for the title this season. In fact, it might have even enhanced it a little!

Epsom & Ewell dominate Croydon (in football friendly).

5 August 2022



The 60 spectators who were present at Fetcham Grove on Tuesday evening witnessed an interesting match, full of scoring opportunities. Although we looked very good, particularly in the first half, Croydon, nicknamed the Trams, will have come away from this match believing that they could and should have got something out of the match on the balance of possession.

The visitors pushed us back to start with, but we took the lead in the 12th minute when a clever through ball from midfield reached Athan Smith-Joseph in space and that is always a dangerous situation for the opposition as our striker, revelling in his more central role this season, simply strolled around the keeper and planted the ball into the empty net.

A Ryan Smith free kick was superbly tipped onto the post and away six minutes later before our own keeper was in action soon after to keep out one of a number of free kicks that we conceded around the edge of the penalty area. He would repeat the save on the half hour, this time to his left, but somewhat against the run of play we extended our lead in the 37th minute after Louis Chin received the ball twenty yards out after good work from Smith-Joseph and he smashed the ball into the net from twenty yards. The shot took a slight deflection, quite probably off one of our own players, but had it been a defender, there's no way it would have been classed as an own goal, so I have credited it to Chinny.

The visitors had a final opportunity just before half time, but an unmarked header was sent straight at our keeper.

We made six changes at the half and many other substitutions would follow throughout the second period. We made it 3-0 in the 48th minute when a Smith free kick was fumbled by the Croydon keeper, and although he recovered well to scoop the ball away before it crossed the line, the loose ball was tapped in by Adam Grant.

We conceded a penalty in the 62nd minute which was dispatched, and then we had a bit of a scuffle following a foul which led to a slight delay, but we scored a fourth goal in the 74th minute after a fine crossfield pass from Jahobi Maher found our striker, whose shot was almost stopped by the keeper, but the ball still had enough on it to cross the line before a defender could reach it. The visitors had the final chance of the evening but a fine defensive block preserved the score line and the whistle blew soon after.

Over the course of the match we fielded 22 players, which tells me that there is still much work to do before this squad is trimmed down to a manageable amount. However, the strength in depth across the squad appears impressive at this stage of the season. It will be interesting to see how this squad copes in the remaining two friendlies, both of which are challenging ones away to Step Four teams Walton & Hersham and Leatherhead.

Epsom & Ewell 1-1 Horsham YMCA

5 August 2022



Pre-season Friendly Saturday 23rd July 2022. We may not have been able to make it four wins in a row in our latest friendly encounter, but we were by no means outclassed and held our own throughout against Step Five Horsham YMCA and scored a second half equaliser to record a deserved 1-1 draw at River Lane, Fetcham; home of Leatherhead Youth FC on Saturday. Around fifty spectators were present.

The match started quietly enough although the visitors nearly opened the scoring with a lob over our exposed keeper that landed on the roof of the net. We then had a couple of incidents that led to the referee asking both Managers whether they wanted to continue the match, which after a small break, we did. By this time we had gone behind as a Horsham YMCA free kick squirmed off our keeper low down and went up off him into the roof of the net. This goal came in the 20th minute.

Although we were not playing that well we did manage to fashion an equaliser five minutes before the break when a slide rule pass inside the defender was squared across goal by our right winger for a straightforward tap in from the same player who had netted our winning goal at Dorking Wanderers. It was a smart goal and without a doubt was the best move of the match.

Six changes were made at half time, as we shuffled the pack on another hot day and the second half remained very even, although in the final twenty minutes we made a couple of decent chances and probably finished slightly the stronger of the two teams. Certainly though a draw was a fair result and I felt that neither side had done enough to show they were worthy of the win.

It was also clear that our Management were not particularly happy with the performance and clearly will be seeking an improvement on Tuesday when Croydon are the visitors to Fetcham Grove. We then follow this with a pair of extremely challenging friendlies against Step Four clubs; at Walton & Hersham on Friday night and at Leatherhead the following Wednesday before our League fixtures kick off at Shoreham on Saturday August 6th.

Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Epsom and Ewell FC on a friendly hat-trick.

5 August 2022



Following 2 wins out of 3 Epsom and Ewell FC went away to Dorking Wanderers XI and won 1 - 2. This 4th pre-season friendly was played on Saturday 16th July 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Richard Lambert

A hot and sunny Meadowbank was the place to be for just over 80 spectators as our pre-season friendlies continued with a 2-1 win against a sort of Dorking Wanderers XI.

The opponents were billed as both an XI and a B team, but the advertising came from the Reserve team, so it's hard to tell exactly which team they were made up from. Clearly though they knew each other well and were extremely young and fit, with the keeper advising me that he was just 15!

And it has to be said our opponents held more of the ball in this encounter than we did, although we restricted them to just a couple of shots on target and when we had chances, we actually looked far more threatening than they did, with a former Epsom player being involved in most of our attacks.

Our first chance came in the 14th minute as a low ball in from Athan Smith-Joseph was just ahead of our man running in, but we took the lead a minute later after another former Epsom player intercepted the ball in midfield and spread the pass out to Smith-Joseph who cut onto his right foot and steered the ball into the far corner from just outside the penalty area. He then had another shot on target on the half hour, but it was unluckily blocked by a team mate.

We had a large drinks break and then followed it with an injury delay as our player who had created the goal fell awkwardly and had to be replaced. In all over nine minutes extra were played. We then made six more changes to the line up and changed our colours from blue and white to yellow and could have extended our lead after Josh Alder got through on goal, but his shot was saved comfortably and in the 49th minute the home side equalised with a close range shot that our keeper was unable to block.

Further changes followed throughout the match as the heat continued to beat down and a really good take down of a crossfield pass gave us another opportunity, but the shot went into the side netting. Fortunately that same player would get another chance in the 90th minute as he ran on to a good ball over the top of the defence and his close range finish gave the keeper no chance, and our first ever win at the rebuilt Meadowbank, albeit not for a competitive fixture.

But that will have to wait until the season commences as we are scheduled to visit here twice more, and on this display we have to assume that if this is the make up of the Dorking Wanderers Reserve side for this season then they will be right up there battling for the title too. Our side is still being tweaked with at this stage of the season though and I believe we will improve further before the season commences.

Our next two friendlies against Croydon and Leatherhead Youth have been cancelled, although the Croydon one has been moved to the following Tuesday, 26th July, and will now be played at Leatherhead instead. There may still be a friendly arranged for this coming Saturday, but based on the club's current poor release of information to its supporters, I doubt we will find much more out until just before the day, if indeed there is one at all.

Epsom and Ewell FC win 2, lose 1 in pre-season friendlies.

5 August 2022

Reports courtesy of Richard Lambert of www.eefconline.co.uk

Farnham Town 3-2 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Saturday 2nd July 2022.

The artificial surface at Kings College in Guildford was the place to be to witness the opening match of the Anthony Jupp and Liam Giles era.

Farnham are a Step Five team and they held the balance of the play in the first half, although only broke through in the third minute of injury time when a near post right wing cross was converted with a sidefooted volley past our keeper.

The half time whistle blew immediately after the restart, and both teams changed a number of personnel and in our case, the formation too. This bore fruit within 35 seconds as a smart strike from the left about fifteen yards out put us back on level terms. We then hit the face of the bar with a shot from the left before another shot took a slight deflection and came back off the Farnham post.

Unfortunately a foul just inside the penalty area gave our opponents a spot kick which was converted in the 73rd minute and then two minutes after we had hit the post once again in the 87th minute, Farnham scored a third goal with a fine finish into the top corner from just inside the box.

This third goal was a little harsh on our team, but in the 91st minute we did get a second of our own when our earlier scorer latched on to a fine pass, held off his man and steered the ball under the keeper from an angle about ten yards out for his second of the match. It was the least we deserved, having also hit their woodwork on three occasions during that period!

As always at this stage of the season the performance is more important than the result, but with so many players absent

it is hard to say much more than the scoreline was about fair, largely due to Farnham holding a greater balance of play in the first half. Suffice to say our new Management seemed happy enough with the way things went and that's all that really matters at this point. We move on to meet another Step Five team when we visit Hassocks next Saturday.

Hassocks 0-1 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Saturday 9th July 2022.

It is generally accepted that the most pretty ground in the area is Arundel's; sitting in the shadow of its imposing castle. However, Hassocks home ground of The Beacon would certainly fit in the tier just below that, and on a gorgeous day that was probably too hot for football an impressive crowd around the 130 mark were present to witness our victory, although once again the support from an Epsom point of view was really low. This was a pity as the performance showed a clear upgrade from the previous week, despite the heat, although admittedly both teams were almost entirely changed at half time, so most players only played one half of the match.

This was an incredibly unusual result. In my forty years as a regular supporter I can only recall a couple of previous occasions where the only goal of a match occurred in the opening minute, but that's exactly what happened in this contest. There were more new faces on show at Hassocks, including another former Epsom player from 15 years ago, although the only goal after just 18 seconds, came from a familiar face as Athan Smith-Joseph collected the ball some thirty yards out and strolled unchallenged to the edge of the penalty area before casually striking the ball into the corner of the net. It's possible that our opponents hadn't realised we were playing three at the back to start the match and lost track of the extra man we had further forward, but either way we caught the hosts cold with this strike.

From that point, the home team had as much of the match as we did and had a couple of really good chances to equalise; firstly in the 38th minute when a deep ball to the left was volleyed across goal only for the Hassocks 10 to strike over the bar from close range, and then in the 79th minute when a free kick to the far post was headed against our crossbar and as the ball bounced down and then up again, it wouldn't come down in time for the incoming striker who headed the loose ball over. Our (currently) unnamed keeper, who was different to last week's, also had a good game and made a couple of solid saves, but the match was largely devoid of real goalmouth action and this was a fairly attritional contest at times, which isn't always a bad thing when you are leading.

Did we deserve the win? Maybe a draw would have been fairer over the 90 minutes, but I also felt we were worth a draw at Farnham Town last week and we didn't get it! Whilst the actual result isn't that important at this time of the season, I felt we saw the match out well and this bodes well for the future when some of our other new names will be appearing to strengthen the competition for a place. All in all though; sunny day, lovely ground and my team won. Why would you want to be anywhere else if you truly are a genuine and loyal Epsom supporter?

AFC Uckfield Town 0-2 Epsom & Ewell Pre-season Friendly Tuesday 12th July 2022

In my last report I referred to the clean sheet secured at Hassocks being our first in a long time and we have now added a second just three days later with a good 2-0 win at Step Five AFC Uckfield Town at the Oaks.

We had visited this ground before, back in 2009 for an F.A. Cup tie when one half of the merged Uckfield club were previously known as Wealden FC, and it remains as picturesque as it was back then. Around 65 people attended on a warm and sticky evening to watch the home team hold the upper hand in early proceedings, but without really looking like they would break through.

However, the pattern of the match changed in our favour in the 21st minute. I wouldn't normally advise the name of an unsigned scorer, but seeing as he did it himself on social media, I can advise that Jahobi Maher collected the ball just over 45 yards out and launched a strike at goal. The keeper stumbled, at which point you knew instantly that it was going in for a spectacular opener.

Confidence grew from that point and we should have made it 2-0 with a great move, but Ricardo Fernandes blazed over from the edge of the penalty area. In response the home side flicked a shot at goal but our keeper was able to deal with it comfortably and we extended our lead in the 42nd minute when new signing Nick Wilson met a long throw with a glancing header across and beyond their keeper from around eight yards out, and only a great save from the home keeper stopped a spectacular third goal after a good move concluded with a superb volley from the edge of the area, but the ball was tipped over the bar.

There were less changes than usual at the break with only three players coming on, bringing the total of subs up to four at that point after one of our players had limped off ten minutes from half time. One of these was our keeper from last year, Kane Charles and he would prove to be very busy in the opening quarter of an hour, making a couple of spectacular saves, although he needed some help in the 49th minute when a defensive header back into our penalty area enabled a home striker to shoot at goal, but Louis Chin was perfectly positioned to head the ball off the line via the crossbar and out to safety!

We made four more changes after an hour and the contest, which had been a bit niggly throughout to this point then flared up again after one of our players crashed into the hoardings near the dugouts which required his replacement, but the home side seemed to run out of ideas a little and the game ended in a fairly comfortable 2-0 win in the end.

Phil Walker's final pass....

5 August 2022



Richard Lambert pays homage to the late great footballer who played for Epsom and Ewell FC.

[Photo: **Phil Walker** pictured running the line at West Street on 24th October 1976 in a Charity Match as a **Dennis Waterman XI** defeated an **Epsom XI** 11-10 with the recently deceased Waterman scoring a hat-trick. Over 2,000 were present along with many other famous names like Alan Mullery, Dave Sexton, Tony Gubba and Trevor Lee.]

Photo: Gemini Reynolds

On Friday 8th July 2022 our club lost one of its most famous names when the death was announced of Philip Leonardus Walker at the tragically young age of 67.

Phil was born in Parsons Green on 29th August 1954 and went to Battersea County School in Culvert Road, Battersea where he met another youngster, Trevor Lee. Their stories would of course become inextricably linked, although had Phil been born three days later, he would have been in a different school year and their paths may not have even crossed!

Both of course connected well at a time when it must have been extremely difficult growing up as a young black man in South London, but the pair would become footballing pioneers in arguably the most hostile of environments, the Den; home of Millwall FC.

Although both were very good at football, they went in opposite directions at first. Phil was working in a factory in Acton and got talking to a workmate who was at Wingate F.C. so he went and played with them, scored in his first match and stayed a while.

However, in 1973 he teamed up with Trevor again at Cobham alongside another player in Steve Jones. All three would then sign for Epsom and Ewell in the summer of 1974.



Saturday 08/02/75 v Hornchurch F.A.Vase - Won 1-0.

Back Row: Steve Jones, Ted Yorke, Chris Page, Johnny Eales, Dave Worby, Trevor Lee, Willie Bennett, Dave Ritman

Front Row: Tommy Tuite, Trevor Wales, Phil Walker, Pat O'Connell, Alan Webb

Our club were of course just picking themselves up after years in the doldrums and had just finished as runners-up in the Surrey Senior League, but Manager Pat O'Connell; a former professional himself at Fulham, wanted our club to achieve much more.

Phil joined our club a month after Trevor, due to a holiday in America, and made his debut on Saturday 7th September

1974 when we defeated Chobham 3-0 in a Surrey Senior League Cup tie at West Street, but it was a slow start for the new lad who only made four first team appearances by the December. However, he forced his way into the team as the season progressed and by the end of May we had won the League and Charity Cup double with Phil firmly entrenched in the number 10 shirt.



Phil scores our only goal in the F.A. Vase win over Hornchurch on 8th February 1975

Johnny Eales is the other Epsom player in the photograph and to my knowledge is the only other member of the 12 man squad to have passed away as I write this.

Of course most supporters will remember that 1974/75 season for our run to Wembley Stadium in the very first FA Vase competition, where Phil was a focal part of the run. He scored the only goal in our Quarter-Final victory over Hornchurch and the winner against Stamford in the first leg of the Semi-Final, which was won 2-1 and essentially earned the trip to Wembley, following our goalless draw in the second leg.



Trevor Lee and Phil Walker share a moment at the F.A. Vase Final post-match get together at the Cavalier in Wallington on 19th April 1975 with Manager Pat O'Connell and his Assistant Arthur Evans

Our boys celebrate with the Surrey Senior League Trophy at West Street on 22nd May 1975

Although the day at Wembley ended with a 2-1 defeat, our club was on the football map again and in the early part of 1975/76 Millwall Manager Gordon Jago came calling. The new man in charge already knew of our club and ground, having played against us in the early fifties as Captain of Maidstone United in the Corinthian League. Jago actually took four of our players for trials at Cold Blow Lane. Willie Bennett, one of our finest defenders in club history, and Tommy Tuite, who would become our greatest ever goal scorer were also asked to attend along with Trevor and Phil, but ultimately injury hurt Bennett's chances, while Tuite was considered too small at five feet eight, ironically the same height as Kevin Keegan! Both played matches for Millwall in the Football Combination, before returning to leafy Ewell Village.

However, Trevor and Phil were successful and Phil made the last of his 41 appearances for us against Southall and Ealing Borough (who had another non-league success playing in their team by the name of Alan Devonshire) in an F.A. Cup replay. Phil scored 19 goals in that time. Trevor would return for five appearances in 1985/86, but Phil would never wear our colours again.

Both players were due to sign for Millwall on 13th November 1975 live on the main regional news show of day, The Today show; a programme that would become infamous just over a year later for an interview featuring the Sex Pistols, but back then it was very popular. However, only Trevor made the show as Phil had to have x-rays but he would soon sign a two year contract in December 1975. Both made an instant impact on their debut, with Trevor setting up Phil to score the only goal against Mansfield Town at the Cold Blow Lane end at the old Den, and Phil made 35 appearances that season as promotion to Division Three was achieved.

Despite the obvious fact that they were the only black players in the Lions team at a sad time in our distant past when the National Front were regularly acknowledged on television as the fourth main political party, and even before the implementation of the Race Relations Act in 1976 (which expanded on the previous Acts from 1965 and 1968 and properly started to give some real teeth to the subject of discrimination) they became extremely popular at a ground where the word "hostile" was a tag that many of their supporters embellished as a badge of honour. They remain so to this day.



Promotional photo from Millwall showing Gordon Jago after capturing both Phil and Trevor from Epsom and Ewell FC

Both players became pioneers for their club, although Phil didn't stay that long. He made 167 appearances for them, with 22 goals before moving on. Whilst there he was honoured for his contributions to sport by the Muhammad Ali Scheme in Brixton, along with Olympic Champion Daley Thompson and World Champion Boxer John Conteh.

To give full details of Phil's professional career and achievements, it is much better to refer you to the clubs for whom he played from this point, as they will all have written their own tributes. Suffice to say though, he signed for Charlton Athletic for £120,000 in the summer of 1979 before having a loan spell at Gillingham.

He then made an unusual career move in those days by going abroad in 1983 when he moved to Hong Kong to play for Eastern AA before moving again, this time to Portugal where he joined Leixoes, Boavista and FC Maia before retiring at the age of 41. He also told me that the best ground he ever played at (excluding Epsom's appearance at Wembley Stadium) was Benfica's old Stadium of Light.

He also did some coaching at Maia in the early 2000s and this was put to good use in recent years when he started to run his own soccer school at Wandle Recreation Centre in Mapleton Road, Wandsworth which continues to this day.

Most people will not know that Phil was actually a member of a very talented family and had a couple of brothers; Dennis who also played regularly for Epsom and Ewell, making 102 appearances and scoring 12 goals, and Larrington (Larry) who was a very well-known actor with roles in Minder, The Bill, Inspector Morse and The Chinese Detective amongst others, yet was versatile enough to also be a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company and was a good friend of comedian Lenny Henry. Also, his nephew Kyle Walker-Peters is of course currently a professional footballer with Southampton.

I was extremely fortunate to meet both Phil and Trevor in 2015 when I noticed that Phil had started following our club on Twitter and dropped him a line to see if he would like to have a chat and he was more than happy to meet up and would bring Trevor along too.

When we met that evening I found two extremely modest people who knew they were breaking down barriers and raising the public's perception at a time when it desperately needed to be, but you got the impression that they saw themselves as simply footballers. I didn't feel the need to ask them the same questions they must have heard hundreds of times about their race, and in all honesty, I'd have probably been able to find out those answers from many other previous interviews. I wanted to concentrate on their time at Epsom and Ewell and I think it must have been quite refreshing for them to answer some different questions. In more recent years the Achtung Millwall podcast interviewed Phil and whilst it obviously concentrates more on his time there, it is well worth a listen too.

I said my goodbyes that evening and they said they would try to get along to an Epsom game one day. Regrettably now Phil will never make that journey, but he will never be forgotten at this club while I am here to pass the baton and remind people of our former greats, of which Phil was certainly one!



Trevor Lee and Phil Walker in the summer of 2015

More coverage of our great Epsom and Ewell Football Club on their website <http://www.eefconline.co.uk/>

Farnham Town 3-2 Epsom & Ewell

5 August 2022



Pre-season Friendly Saturday 2nd July 2022. Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk. Reporter: Richard Lambert

New era kicks off with narrow defeat. The artificial surface at Kings College in Guildford was the place to be to witness the opening match of the Anthony Jupp and Liam Giles era, although rather disappointingly out of our regular supporters, only two Committee members, plus myself and my boy Nathan were there to witness it in an attendance of 15.

Pre-season friendlies are not for everyone though and of course many players take the field who will never make the first team squad, so maybe some supporters aren't that concerned! Obviously, due to the time of the season with many players not signed up and the recent departures of Luke Miller and Tommy Smith, I won't be releasing any names here, except to say that many players were away this week and that out of the twenty-two players present, of whom twenty had a run out, there were only three players on the field who finished the season with us. There were also two former Epsom players on show.

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The half time whistle blew immediately after the restart, and both teams changed a number of personnel and in our case, the formation too. This bore fruit within 35 seconds as a smart strike from the left about fifteen yards out put us back on level terms. We then hit the face of the bar with a shot from the left before another shot took a slight deflection and came back off the Farnham post.

Unfortunately a foul just inside the penalty area gave our opponents a spot kick which was converted in the 73rd minute and then two minutes after we had hit the post once again in the 87th minute, Farnham scored a third goal with a fine finish into the top corner from just inside the box.

This third goal was a little harsh on our team, but in the 91st minute we did get a second of our own when our earlier scorer latched on to a fine pass, held off his man and steered the ball under the keeper from an angle about ten yards out for his second of the match. It was the least we deserved, having also hit their woodwork on three occasions during that period!

As always at this stage of the season the performance is more important than the result, but with so many players absent it is hard to say much more than the scoreline was about fair, largely due to Farnham holding a greater balance of play in the first half. Suffice to say our new Management seemed happy enough with the way things went and that's all that really matters at this point. We move on to meet another Step Five team when we visit Hassocks next Saturday.

Midhurst & Easebourne 2 - 1 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League - Division One Playoff Semi-Final

5 August 2022



Reporter: Richard Langley, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

A poor start leads to a premature season's end

After three very tight meetings between ourselves and Midhurst & Easebourne this season, this Playoff Semi-Final always threatened to follow a similar path and over the ninety minutes we witnessed another even contest. Unfortunately, a poor opening twenty minutes left us 2-0 down and we were never able to recover, eventually losing by the same score as we had just four days previously in the Division One Cup Final. Both teams appeared to be at full strength for this match, although for us that meant once again that Player/Manager Jamie Byatt was unable to take the field. At the back, Gideon Acheampong was able to start and upfront Mario Qurassaca made his first start. As a result, Jerry Antwi and Mo Cisse started on the bench, although both would enter the playing arena later.

For those who noted my gladiatorial reference to an arena here, it is largely because of the way these two teams squared up following the conclusion of the aforementioned Cup Final, and if I'm honest I expected more fireworks here. However, Referee Paul Saunders was totally on top of this match and ensured that hardly any extra-curricular activity took place this time. We had an early free-kick from which Ricardo Fernandes gave Josh Bird some early catching practice, but were behind in the sixth minute when Lewis Hamilton drove through our static defence and slotted the ball past Sheikh Ceesay from close range.

This was an awful start and it got worse in the 22nd minute when a deep ball in was met by a looping header towards goal, but somehow Liam Dreckmann was able to reach it first to force the ball in from close range. We didn't know it for certain at the time, but the damage was already done, although we fought back well from this point and made it a much more even contest for the remainder of the afternoon. A corner was flicked onto the far post where Tyreke Leslie struck at goal from a narrow angle, but Bird was equal to the shot and turned it around the post. Next to try was Mike Hill with a long-range strike that Bird clawed away from under pressure from Qurassaca, although our striker was flagged offside, so it wouldn't have counted as he was definitely in Bird's line of sight. Then in the 39th minute, we pulled a goal back and it was a bit of a strange one really as a ball over the top fell kindly for Qurassaca who then failed to control it, but as a result of this, Bird came out of goal only to then realise that he wasn't going to get there in time and Qurassaca then nodded the ball over him and it bounced over the line and up into the roof of the net from eighteen yards. He had a half-chance to score another as a deep cross was headed over at full stretch, but as the halftime whistle went, it looked like we had finally got going and there was still plenty of time to go to salvage this.

An early Hill header in the opening minute was covered easily by Bird but the majority of this half would be spent in midfield as the home side kept us largely subdued. In the Cup match they had negated our threat on the wings by putting two men on them; a trick Roffey had also used against us back in March, but in this second half both Luke Miller and Athan Smith-Joseph seemed to play deeper, which meant that our service to Qurassaca was extremely limited and he too then dropped further back leaving us with no one upfront. Midhurst then cut us apart on the hour with a deep ball over on the left that was volleyed across goal but fortunately with no one there to meet it.

Unfortunately, we were then forced into a couple of substitutions as Hill departed, but also Brad Peters who appeared to suffer a recurrence of the injury he picked up at Mile Oak seven days previously. They were replaced by Cisse and Antwi respectively. Miller's shot was then blocked by a defender before Bird clawed away another deep delivery. We had a little incident when Dreckmann squared up to Ceesay who pushed back and I thought that the award of a yellow card for both was a little harsh on our keeper. Ceesay then made an important save after our defender missed a ball in from the left, but our man was out quickly to smother the ball which squirted out for a corner, which was then headed over by Marcus Bedford. Josh Uzun entered the fray with five minutes left as we made an attacking substitution, but five minutes from

time Acheampong then dragged Bedford back as he threatened to get through and picked up a yellow card that could have been red, had he committed the offence a little closer to goal instead of back on the halfway line.

As time ran out we had a bit of good pressure and Fernandes' low shot from outside the penalty area was powerful enough, but wide, and Smith-Joseph had the last meaningful attempt on goal in the fourth of seven minutes of injury time, but Bird was able to make the easy save.

And this summed up the match and to a certain extent the season. We were never really able to hurt our opponents enough in this match and you just felt that a fully fit Byatt would have been the difference in many of these matches this season. As I look back at the stats I can see that he scored thirty-one goals in twenty-eight appearances, of which we lost just six, but the unseen statistic here is that he was unable to take the field in thirteen matches and we lost six of those too. Without him, we just weren't the same and at the age of forty, it will be interesting to see whether he retains the tag of Player/Manager next season or whether we have seen the last of him as a player.

So Midhurst & Easebourne progress to a playoff final at home to Shoreham, who defeated Seaford Town 2-0 on their own pitch, while we now face another season in Sussex at Step Six, our fifth season at that level. There are worse places to play football without a doubt, but it feels somewhat underwhelming that a team this good has fallen away so badly this season, finishing with four straight losses. For sure it has been a horrible end to the season if you are an Epsom fan and no, there is no time left to bounce back.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Gideon Acheampong, Louis Chin, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Luke Miller, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Mario Qurassaca, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Mo Cisse for Hill (64), Jerry Antwi for Peters (64), Josh Uzun for Chin (85)

Match Report: Midhurst & Easebourne 2 - 1 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination Cup Final

5 August 2022



Reporter: Richard Langley, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

Salts fall in the final seconds

After two very even contests already this season, it was no surprise that this third meeting at the neutral venue of Alfold FC produced another close encounter. Unfortunately for our boys, a 96th-minute goal from James Liddiard came too late to reply to and we had to accept defeat by two goals to one.

With a very important playoff match coming up against the same opposition on Saturday, I wondered how the teams would line up, but both went as strong as they could. Brad Peters was good to go at the back after limping off on Saturday at Mile Oak, while Mike Hill was back in the starting line up as was Mo Cisse. Kofi Quartey and Josh Uzun found themselves on the bench alongside the fit-again Gideon Acheampong.

And we got off to a flyer. Athan Smith-Joseph broke through the middle and had time to steady himself before slotting the ball low to the right of Midhurst keeper Josh Bird to open the scoring in the fourth minute.

The opposition sent a dangerous free-kick through our six-yard area and out the other side, but this was to be a game of few actual chances. Midhurst nearly got back on level terms after a low ball in from the left was well blocked and then kicked away by Sheikh Ceesay just before the half-hour mark before Hill and Liam Dreckmann picked up a yellow card each for an episode of handbags. This was typical of much of the first half as a niggly match was played out, aided and abetted by a referee who wanted to stop play every few minutes, although he also missed Hill getting clattered on the side of the head. Then when Hill was kicked up in the air by Harry Giles he received a lecture, but no card.

It was apparent though that our opponents were beginning to gain the upper hand in the match and they deservedly drew level in the 39th minute with an acrobatic overhead kick from Marcus Bedford from close range that gave Ceesay no chance.

At the half, Hill was replaced by Acheampong with Louis Chin moving into midfield and despite the loss of our gifted playmaker, our team began to tick a little better as a result. Ricardo Fernandes made a good run on the left only for his cross to be palmed away by Bird just ahead of Tyreke Leslie before Luke Miller tried his luck in the 69th minute with a powerful strike from a very narrow-angle, but he was also off target.

We had a flashpoint in the 71st minute when Bird was out quickly to clear a through ball just ahead of Fernandes and on his way back to goal he patted our man on the head, which Fernandes clearly didn't like and his reaction earned him a yellow card after the obligatory ten-man scuffle had settled down. Meanwhile, Bird wasn't even spoken to!

In the 76th minute Mario Qurassaca made his debut, coming on for Leslie as we began to threaten a little more. Cisse struck well from 25 yards and was inches wide of the post with Bird unsure and scrambling, although at the other end we were then caught out by a deep ball from the right, only for substitute Will Essai to blaze over from a decent position about twelve yards out.

Then in the 89th minute we had a golden opportunity as a Peters pass rebounded kindly for Qurassaca who was through on goal as a result, but after riding a challenge he then dragged his shot just beyond Bird's right hand post from twelve yards with the other side of the goal looking like the better option.

Uzun came on for Cisse as we approached injury time, presumably ahead of what was looking like a sure-fire penalty shootout, but Midhurst had one more card to play and a low near post strike was kept out by Ceesay, but only for a corner. From the delivery James Liddiard rose highest to meet the ball, glancing it in from close range in the sixth minute of injury time. Ceesay was appealing for a foul and it did appear that he may well have been held back, but the offence wasn't spotted and seconds after the restart the match was over.

Having spoken to a number of people after the match, no one could work out exactly why we played as much as six minutes extra time, but this was almost forgotten as upon the final whistle there was a big scuffle between the players which seemed to go on for quite a while and when the smoke cleared and everyone had calmed down Jerry Antwi had received a red card. I don't believe this will keep him out of Saturday's rematch in Midhurst, but it would definitely rule him out of any playoff Final should we get there.

Did we deserve to lose this cup final? No, we didn't, but equally, it could be argued that we didn't do enough to win it either, although we did improve in the second half. It was a tight match that just didn't go our way. Maybe on Saturday, the positions will be reversed, but one thing appears certain. It should be another close match!

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Mo Cisse, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Tyreke Leslie, Mike Hill, Luke Miller

Subs: Gideon Acheampong for Hill (HT), Mario Qurassaca for Leslie (76), Josh Uzun for Cisse (89)

Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 1 - 2 Dorking Wanderers Reserve, Southern Combination League - Division One

5 August 2022



Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report source: eefconline.co.uk

With our aspirations of the title mathematically disappearing on Saturday, our hopes of a home playoff match took a massive knock with a 2-1 home defeat against Dorking Wanderers Reserves who became the second club to record a "double" over us in the process. Results elsewhere meant that we dropped back below our opponents, but more significantly in terms of playoffs we also slipped behind Seaford Town and even a win at Mile Oak on Saturday will not guarantee us a home match in the post-season lottery, with a trip to Seaford now looking the most likely outcome.

Worse still, this great club I have supported loyally for forty years and which used to be such an inclusive and friendly, family community outfit, but nowadays only pays lip service to those attributes, showed a complete and utter lack of class in refusing to hold a minute's silence for former Scottish Amateur International player Gerry O'Rourke, who made 43 appearances for us in 1976/77, scoring twelve goals, and had passed away eight days previously. No reason was provided for the refusal and in my time here nobody has ever knowingly been denied a minute's silence, be it player, official or long-term supporter.

Following our win at Arundel on Saturday both Tommy Smith and Athan Smith-Joseph were unable to go in this match and this was unfortunate as I'm certain that both would have made a difference in this encounter. The visitors opened up by putting a decent chance wide in the opening minutes while Mike Hill struck at goal from distance but without troubling Barnett in the visitor's goal. Then we had the further misfortune as Manager Jamie Byatt limped off, clearly frustrated and

annoyed in the 20th minute.

We had shaded possession to this point, but without providing much of a real threat. Ricardo Fernandes did well on the right-wing to deliver a ball across goal but there was no one there except for Hill at the back post, and his delivery back in was then miscued by Fernandes as he tried a spectacular volley.

We went behind in the 34th minute when George Membrillera received the ball about ten yards out and turned his defender far too easily, rolling the ball back across Sheikh Ceesay for the opening goal. Things became worse when Nabeel Ghannam struck at goal from at least twenty yards out just before half time and the ball sailed over Ceesay's head and into the net for a second goal, although our keeper redeemed himself with a good save from Conan Torpey who had broken through on goal moments later. Unfortunately, almost the final act of the first half was the departure of Hill into the dressing room as he was struggling with his breathing after putting in two tremendous shifts for us in the last week. His reappearance for the playoff matches will be absolutely crucial to our hopes.

With no Byatt and no Hill, it was always going to be an uphill shift for our boys in the second half, but they made a decent fist of it. Daryl Spiers came on for his debut after joining from Horley Town in relief of Tre Towers and we nearly pulled one back through another sub, Tyreke Leslie after a corner reached him at the far post, but his shot was blocked by Barnett's legs. Minutes later Luke Miller struck at goal, only for the ball to strike Kofi Quartey and deflect just wide of the post. It could have gone anywhere!

Josh Uzun was next to the show, and he reached a ball ahead of Barnett, but the keeper stood his ground and he had to pass back out and the danger was cleared. The visitors were being pushed further back though, with Quartey causing his defender a lot of problems and Miller attacking from the left and in the 66th minute, his run was ended abruptly by a defender in the penalty area. However, Uzun's spot-kick was a really poor one by his standards, straight at the keeper and without any real power and Barnett was actually down to save before the ball got there. This was probably why he was unable to hold on to it, but we were unable to get the loose ball in and the danger was cleared again.

Next to try was Fernandes after Quartey was brought down, but his free-kick from twenty yards just dipped over the bar, clipping the netting on its way down. Then Miller struck at goal, but it was just going wide before Leslie got ahead to the ball, but couldn't get it on target despite being only a few yards out.

The visitors were picking up yellow cards on a regular basis, three of them for delaying restarts, or in Nathan Hawkins' case, simply throwing the ball away over the fence! We were piling on the pressure and Spiers sent a header wide from a deep Louis Chin free-kick before Spiers found Quartey in a good position, only for our man to lob the ball well over the bar.

We finally opened our account in the 89th minute when a deep Spiers ball in was flicked on to Quartey at the far post and his volley sent the ball back across goal and in off the far post. There was still time to save a point, but when the ball fell to Leslie at the far post with the keeper committed, he missed the target from close range! We kept pushing and Miller sent another dangerous ball in left-footed, only for Quartey to miss the ball which was then cleared.

By the end of a frustrating ninety minutes, it is fair to say that we definitely deserved something from this match, but when you look at the league table, you will see that a point makes no real difference to our situation. We needed all three and we failed to get them and will now almost certainly have to travel larger distances if we are to gain promotion now. It isn't beyond us, assuming we can get some of our injured players back and the good news for us is that we don't have to meet our local Dorking rivals again this season. It was about the only bit of good news though.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Tre Towers, Luke Miller, Mike Hill, Jamie Byatt, Josh Uzun, Ricardo Fernandes

Subs: Tyreke Leslie for Byatt (20) Kofi Quartey for Hill (45), Daryl Spiers for Towers (49)

Match Report: Arundel 1-4 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League - Division One

5 August 2022



Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Report source: eefconline.co.uk

Back in 1979 we made our first ever visit to Mill Road for a competitive fixture, winning an FA Cup tie by a goal to nil. We then visited in 2012 for another FA Cup tie winning 2-1, so Saturday's 4-1 win completed a winning hat trick for our boys



and the result was never really in doubt as we took control of the match early and kept our hosts at arm's length for the remainder of the match. There were many similarities between this win and Wednesday's defeat of Hailsham Town as we dominated much of the proceedings and probably should have scored more, particularly in the first half when we took the lead after just 85 seconds but didn't add to the tally until the second half. That goal was a personal triumph for Ricardo Fernandes who completed some fine interplay with Mike Hill - or should that be "Air Force Mike" - to slip the ball past a defender and then stab the ball home at the near post to register his first goal for the club. Further chances followed as a Tyreke Leslie shot was deflected just wide and from the following corner, Brad Peters met the delivery with a decent volley, only for it to go straight at Pa Susso in the Arundel goal.

The remainder of the first half was played mostly in Arundel's half of the field, but without really penetrating too often. Athan Smith-Joseph received a superb crossfield ball from Hill and then cut in onto his preferred right foot, but his shot was also deflected over the bar before Peters sent another volley just over from another corner. At halftime, you felt we were well in control, but until that second goal came, we couldn't relax completely. Well, that second goal came just two and a half minutes after the restart and with Hill pulling the strings again he found Smith-Joseph who turned and struck at goal from an angle. The ball took a faint deflection off a defender towards the goal and the ball then went in off the far post from 12 yards. Was it an own goal? Arguably, but the deflection was so faint I don't believe it would be fair to credit it elsewhere. Luke Miller entered the fray after Leslie received a knock and Josh Uzun also came on soon after for Tre Towers. It has to be said that our bench looked extremely strong this day and whilst Gideon Acheampong and Jamie Byatt were probably not going to take the field in this match, except in emergencies, the five players we had there probably represented the strongest bench we have seen since our 2018 relegation.

Unfortunately, and after looking in complete control we gifted the hosts a goal back after a defensive miscommunication which allowed Ollie Hawkins the chance to roll the ball into the net in the 56th minute. This was our first goal conceded for 416 minutes; our best run since 1988. Steve Springett came on for Tommy Smith on the hour as Byatt rotated and rested, obviously well aware of our upcoming run of matches, and the new man nearly made an instant impact as his volley from Hill's corner was deflected wide for another one. When it came in after some interplay out on the wing, Kofi Quartey was unable to direct his header on target, and would probably have been relieved to see the Assistant's flag go up for offside. We were finishing stronger though and hit the bar twice in quick succession, firstly after Miller met a Smith-Joseph cross with a header and then just three minutes later when Fernandes struck it from twenty yards. However, at 2-1 we were still vulnerable and Sheikh Ceesay was out bravely to make a fine save as the Arundel striker ran in on goal, requiring a bit of treatment before being able to continue. It still seemed a matter of when, not if the third goal would come, but we left it late after Uzun's pass left Smith-Joseph through and he beat his man before scoring his second of the day with a thumping strike from about ten yards in the 89th minute. Seven minutes later we made it 4-1 as Hill robbed a defender thirty yards out and ran in before slotting the ball past Susso from close range.

The 4-1 win was probably about fair, even if two of the goals came late, much as they had at Leatherhead when Arundel pulled back a pair in the closing stages of our 6-2 win. Arundel is a lovely place to play football and it is very sad to see their current plight. Despite finishing in the bottom three places this season, I'm confident they will remain at Step Six for 2022/23, but will we be making the journey here again next season?

Right now, our win has pushed us back up to third place ahead of Dorking Wanderers Reserves who visit us on Monday, and two wins will guarantee our first top-three finish since 2014. Additionally, Midhurst & Easebourne's loss to Shoreham means that they will have to win their final two games to be certain of finishing above us, should we win those two matches. A second-place finish would be our first since 1984. Results this afternoon have now guaranteed us, Shoreham and Seaford Town a playoff position, probably alongside Midhurst with Roffey taking the title. It's a pity that we haven't quite been able to do enough to win the title this season, although as things stand, we are in good form and I believe our players aren't scared by whoever and wherever they have to play. Home advantage in those playoffs would still be nice though.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Tre Towers, Athan Smith-Joseph, Ricardo Fernandes, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Luke Miller for Leslie (53) Josh Uzun for Towers (54), Steve Springett for Smith (60)

Hailsham Town 0-3 Epsom & Ewell, Southern Combination League Division One Cup Semi-Final

5 August 2022



Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Salts cruise into Cup Final

In my forty years as a supporter, this was the seventeenth Semi-Final I have witnessed. Some have been tense, nail-biting and really nervy, but our complete control of this match ensured a completely drama-free evening for our boys as we eased past the Hailsham Town challenge and won by three goals to nil to enter the Division One Cup Final, where we will meet Midhurst & Easebourne.

After an eighteen daybreak, it was to be hoped that many of our injured players would have had time to heal and it was good to see Jamie Byatt able to return to the field of play after a few months of struggling with an injury and he was joined by Steve Springett who had limped out of the Roffey match and started in place of the late-running Tommy Smith who would join later from the bench. However, Gideon Acheampong and Kane Charles were not yet ready to go and Mo Cisse and Josh Uzun were also absent.

Still, we had plenty of talent on the pitch and started well, controlling proceedings in the early stages and took the lead in the tenth minute. Tyreke Leslie had already found himself in dangerous positions but had been unable to convert. However, in the tenth minute, a ball into the left-hand channel from Luke Miller was struck across goal left-footed by Leslie and into the far corner to open the scoring.

Brad Peters headed a free-kick just over the bar before we had our only real scare of the night in the fifteenth minute when a Hailsham defender fell to the ground while battling with Jerry Antwi. The appeal for a penalty was made by quite a few opposition players, but the referee was not interested and the game progressed. Little did Hailsham realise that this would be about as close as they would get all night.

Next to strike at goal was Miller, only to see his low drive palmed away by Jack Lovick and we had another couple of efforts from Miller and Byatt flying wide before the halftime break.

In truth, we had eased off a bit towards the half, although words were had in the dressing room and the players came out in a more determined mood, and as with the first half, we scored ten minutes in when a clever low ball in from the left by Mike Hill was met by Byatt who showed he had lost none of his poacher's instinct to dispatch the ball past Lovick from close range for our second goal.

Athan Smith-Joseph then took Byatt's place after an hour and the attacks continued with Hill pulling the strings in midfield again. His strike on goal from twenty yards was turned wide by Lovick as we searched for a third goal. At the other end, Sheikh Ceesay had to venture to the edge of his box to head away a through ball, but he had very little to do on the night and we were soon back on the attack with Leslie flicking a header onto Hill who was just wide with another twenty yarder.

Hailsham couldn't deal with Hill at all and Harrison Burley picked up a yellow card after dragging him to the floor. Although the opponents struck at goal in the 80th minute, it was well wide and high of the mark and we sealed the match with a third goal in the 81st minute when a ball towards the edge of the box left Lovick and a defender in two minds about whose job it was to clear the danger and Leslie nipped in between them to knock the ball into an empty net. Or so I thought, as before he did this, he chose to hold the ball up first as a defender tried to block on the line before then stroking the ball in from close range.

For those who like a stat, this was our fourth clean sheet in a row and the last time we achieved this was back in 1988 when our keeper was Jason Hopper! Bearing in mind that most of the plaudits this season have been directed at our league-leading scorers, this is quite an achievement. In reality, this was one of the most comfortable matches we have had in a while, and as we reach the business end of the season it is good to report that on this form we look capable of securing the points we need to ensure us of at least a third-place finish and a great chance of success in the playoffs. And now we have a Cup Final to look forward to as well.

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Steve Springett, Tre Towers, Luke Miller, Ricardo Fernandes, Jamie Byatt, Mike Hill, Tyreke Leslie

Subs: Athan Smith-Joseph for Byatt (60), Tommy Smith for Springett (70), Dale Hanson-Byatt for Miller (86)

Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 4-0 Selsey, Southern Combination League - Division One

5 August 2022



Report Source: www.eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman



Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Louis Chin, Jerry Antwi, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Mo Cisse, Luke Miller, Tre Towers, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Josh Uzun for Cisse (HT), Tyreke Leslie for Smith-Joseph (52), Archie De Bono for Towers (67)

A few days ago we drew 0-0 with leaders Roffey, replicating the score from earlier in the season and on Saturday we did it again, only this time it was a 4-0 win that was repeated, as a dispirited and short handed Selsey side held their own for twenty minutes before being swept aside by a blue tide for the remainder of the match. It's also worth noting that this was our third clean sheet in a row, which is the first time we have achieved this all season. This was an extremely dominant performance, and the only criticism that could be levelled at our team was our failure to be more clinical in front of goal, as we could and probably should have scored many more. Indeed, visiting keeper Sid Davies admitted to me at the end that we could have had ten. The win moves us back up into second place for now and was achieved without some players who had featured against Roffey four days previously; Gideon Acheampong was out with a knee injury, while Steve Springett was also unsurprisingly out after limping off near the end of that previous match as was Ricardo Fernandes.

However, Mike Hill was ready to go in midfield and with Athan Smith-Joseph and Luke Miller on the wings again feeding Kofi Quartey, we were always going to create chances. At the back Louis Chin came in for Acheampong, while Sheikh Ceesay retained his place between the posts as Kane Charles continued to rehabilitate with his ankle injury. Selsey named four substitutes on the name board at the ground, but actually only had eleven players present throughout and they weren't the only ones who had trouble getting to the match as one of the Assistants was late arriving, so Chairman Mel Tough's son Jack, a qualified official, ran the line for the opening eighteen minutes!

The match started very quietly. In fact the only item in my notebook was the change of official before we started to gain the upper hand just before the twenty minute mark. A left wing Smith-Joseph cross just grazed the head of a full stretch Quartey before Luke Miller jumped like a salmon against his much taller defender to head a Hill cross just wide. We were ahead in the 25th minute and it was a goal of real simplicity as Miller received a pass on the right and sent in a pinpoint cross for Smith-Joseph to meet with a side footed volley that gave Davies no chance from six yards out. We nearly had a second after a great run down the left from Mo Cisse whose low ball in was just cleared behind by a defender, missing his own posts by a couple of feet. However, we extended our lead in the 32nd minute when Hill sent the ball into the box where Miller flicked it on to Quartey who then struck the ball down into the ground and across Davies into the far corner of the goal from about ten yards away. This was also our 100th goal of the season and we weren't finished yet. We were well on top now and the attacks kept coming. Hill's shot was deflected just over the bar after good work from Tre Towers and Quartey before Hill's corner was met by Brad Peters, who sent his header up but somehow was also the first to reach it as it fell, although his shot was just wide of the post. Hill was directing traffic now, despite playing ninety minutes in trainers, and we had a third goal on the stroke of half time when Miller tried to find Cisse out on the left, only for the ball to deflect and fall kindly into Quartey's path and he showed real composure to wait until Davies had come out before easing the ball over the exposed keeper and into the net from the edge of the six yard box.

At half time this game was over and certainly some supporters thoughts were turning towards whether we could really boost our already impressive goal difference. We made a substitution at the break when Josh Uzun replaced Cisse and went after more goals. Smith-Joseph produced one of his trademark mazy runs but then sliced his shot from the edge of the penalty area, before Hill's free kick delivery fell perfectly for Uzun who somehow managed to steer the ball wide from only six yards out. Then Tyreke Leslie who had just replaced Smith-Joseph got through on goal, but overrun the ball which ended up in the keeper's arms. Not so for Miller though. He received the ball out on the right from Hill in the 56th minute and drilled the ball powerfully back across Davies into the bottom corner from about twelve yards out to make it 4-0. Now if someone had told me we wouldn't score again at that point, I would have been very surprised, yet there were to be no further goals in this match. It wasn't for lack of trying, and Hill's deflected free kick led to a corner that Leslie headed wide at the far post, although a free kick had been awarded against us for an earlier infringement. Then Miller sent a teasing low ball in to the far post, but Leslie chose to hit it right footed and was inches wide from just a few yards out. Finally, our third substitute Archie De Bono made a great run from the right back slot and found Quartey at the near post who set up Leslie, but the shot was straight at Davies this time. Miller sent another shot just over the bar in the closing moments before we nearly had a lucky fifth goal in injury time after Uzun's free kick took a heavy deflection, but the wrong-footed Davies was just able to recover in time to reach the ball before it crossed the line.

This was a tricky banana skin match. Selsey had been in good form coming into this contest, and whilst they were clearly not at full strength, this was still a good performance. I believe that three wins from our remaining three League games will prove to be good enough for second place, but if not, it would at least guarantee third and a home play off on Saturday 30th April. That has to be our target now.

Match Report: Epsom & Ewell 0-0 Roffey, Southern Combination League - Division One

5 August 2022



Report Source: eefconline.co.uk

Reporter: Richard Lambert, Photos by Gemma Jarman

Epsom & Ewell: Sheikh Ceesay, Gideon Acheampong, Steve Springett, Brad Peters (c), Tommy Smith, Mo Cisse, Luke Miller, Ricardo Fernandes, Kofi Quartey, Mike Hill, Athan Smith-Joseph

Subs: Josh Uzun for Hill (71), Jerry Antwi for Springett (85)

For a few weeks now we have been relying on other teams to drop points if we were to catch the top two. However, these permutations also required us to beat both of those clubs when they visited, and whilst we defeated Midhurst and Eastbourne ten days previously, we also needed a win against the leaders Roffey and we were unable to achieve this at Fetcham Grove on Tuesday night; being held to a goalless draw, which now ends anything but bizarre mathematical outcomes in our race for the title. It is ironic that we have had just two goalless draws this season and that both have come against Roffey. Both matches followed a similar pattern with our boys starting brightly, but tailing off and by the end, as with the first match, the visitors could argue that they were the stronger side.

It was a rather strange occasion really. Despite hardly any other matches being on in the area, a rather small audience were present to witness this match between two of the best sides in the league and it even appeared as though the opponents had an extra man. No, hold on, somewhere in amongst the visitors' all black kit was the referee, who I'm sure was quite happy on the field watching two teams battle it out as he knew that he wasn't one of the players, but for spectators it made for a confusing spectacle and when players gathered together it became almost impossible from the side-lines to see where he was! I suppose they say that the best referee is one you don't notice, but we couldn't even see him!

Regrettably leading scorer Jamie Byatt remained off the field with his injury and it might have been so different had he played as we had two chances in the early stages that you just know he'd have taken. In just the sixth minute a deep Mike Hill corner was sent back into the danger area by Tommy Smith, only for Brad Peters to get a strike on goal from 12 yards, but the contact wasn't the greatest and the Roffey keeper Hughes was able to get down and claim the ball before it crossed the line. Then three minutes later another ball in from Hill reached Peters again who found Athan Smith-Joseph some four yards out, but Hughes was out quickly to block the shot superbly.

The tempo was extremely high from both teams in these early stages and the visitors fired towards the top corner from a free kick, but Sheikh Ceesay was there in time to keep the ball out. Then Ricardo Fernandes had a try against his former club from a narrow angle but found the side netting, and although a corner was awarded we were unable to get a shot on target. This was a highly competitive encounter though and Roffey's Ross Swaine received a lecture from the referee, before our own Gideon Acheampong and Smith-Joseph were also given the third degree as the referee tried to keep the match card free. Smith-Joseph was particularly fortunate to escape further punishment and there were howls of protest from the opposition when Harry Law then picked up the first yellow card of the match five minutes from the break.

Another yellow card followed early in the second half after a visiting striker went down in the penalty area after Ceesay had come out, but our keeper made no contact and the referee deemed the fall quite rightly to be simulation. However, our attacks were becoming less frequent and when Hill broke through before sending a tame shot straight at Hughes, you began to wonder where we were likely to score from. Kofi Quartey was causing issues for their defenders but was rarely given even a half opportunity to shoot and both Smith-Joseph and Luke Miller were unable to get around their back line from where they usually do so much damage. We then had a scare in the 63rd minute when a low ball across from the left was met at the far post by Callum Jardim only to see his shot headed away off the line by the alert Steve Springett, running across to cover his lines. Two minutes later Josh Neathey made a good run to collect a ball over the top of our defence, but blazed his shot high and wide of the advancing Ceesay. Fernandes struck on target in the 68th minute and although Hughes was a little slow going down he palmed the ball away, but the game was becoming a little more attritional and a niggly scuffle broke out a few minutes later which resulted in another yellow card for the visitors; this time to Tiago Andrade, while shortly afterwards I think it was Peters that picked up our first card for kicking the ball out of the ground just after a free kick had been given against us.

The match ended with Springett being helped away gingerly with an Achilles injury and as he limped off, being replaced by Jerry Antwi, one of our other substitutes Josh Uzun received the ball from a misdirected Hughes clearance and sent it back with interest, but the effort was a yard wide of the far post and in fairness Hughes appeared to have done enough to get back to cover his goal. The match ended soon after and I think a point was a fair result. I would imagine that the visitors were the happier of the two teams with that point as they emerge from what looked like their toughest remaining match on their schedule unbeaten and still clear at the top, while for us, seven points behind and with only four matches left, we just have to aim to finish as high as we can.

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get back to cover his goal. The match ended soon after and I think a point was a fair result. I would imagine that the visitors were the happier of the two teams with that point as they emerge from what looked like their toughest remaining match on their schedule unbeaten and still clear at the top, while for us, seven points behind and with only four matches left, we just have to aim to finish as high as we can. A second place finish would be our best achievement since 1984, although of course even this wouldn't guarantee us promotion due to the invention of the playoffs. This is frustrating because last year four went up, while the promoted numbers were at least the top two and usually three in prior seasons, but we knew the rules at the start of the season and if we can keep our players fit and healthy, we will have every chance of success. However, the injury list is mounting, and we could really do with some more players back soon to give our Player/Manager a few more options, not least the one where he is able to pick himself again!

Overall though, and despite the draw keeping us down in fourth place, I think it was a point gained. One of our players commented that we had played well defensively, and that the visitors hardly had a shot on target. This is true, but at the same time we also created little and whenever our wingers got the ball there appeared to be a sea of Roffey players waiting to block their paths to goal. They were quite possibly the fittest team we have played, and despite the score line not suiting us, I was a little relieved to hear the final whistle at the end as they looked the more likely to break the deadlock. Are Roffey the best team we have played this season? I don't think they were, and personally would have Seaford Town in front of them, but at the same time our league leading scoring attack has failed to score against Roffey in 180 minutes, so they must be doing something right! For our part, second place is still achievable, but with four league matches left, I think we will need to win all of our remaining four matches to reach that position. Failing that, we will be making a playoff trip to deepest Sussex instead of hosting someone at Fetcham Grove; a more difficult, but not insurmountable path.